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16 Management perspectives of mountaineering tourism

Carl Cater

As this book has shown, past decades have seen a change in mountaineering tourism from individual recreation to more commercialized opportunities, in parallel to an underlying trend of vastly increased numbers of people seeking to experience mountains. This volume fills the gap identified by Pomfret who suggested 'previous studies on mountaineers have focused on mountaineering as a form of adventure recreation rather than adventure tourism' (2006: 113), with limited prior research on the tourism elements of mountaineering recreation. It is impossible to separate mountaineering from mountain tourism more generally because the increasing convergence in the industry has increased commercialization. Indeed, authors such as Varley (2006) have documented the existence of the spectrum of adventure pursuits called the Adventure Commodification Continuum, which is applicable to mountaineering tourism, and can be classified as soft tourism or hard tourism (Hill 1995). Soft mountaineering activities might include undertaking less challenging mountain routes independently, taking part in activities led by experienced guides, or participating in a mountaineering course to develop technical skills and enable progression to greater goals. These usually entail low levels of risk, minimum commitment and beginner level skills. Hard mountaineering activities include rock climbing, mountaineering expeditions and strenuous treks (Millington *et al.* 2001). These activities have been dubbed SCARRA (Skilled Commercial Adventure Recreation in Remote Areas) by Buckley (2006), and are commonly motivated by, risk, challenge and exploration. While competent mountaineers may undertake these activities unaided, for example in the UK mountains, logistical support and guiding is often required for higher peaks in the Greater Ranges. Thus mountaineering provides plenty of scope for participation at different levels and is growing in popularity.

However, it is somewhat unhelpful to divide these ends of the spectrum as many new and existing mountain tourism practices rely on the same supporting infrastructure. For example, mountain tourists to the Himalaya all use the same airstrips, trekking routes, teahouses and base camps, whether they are casual trekkers or committed mountaineers. Whilst the former are partly inspired by the latter, they are all part of a commodification of mountain environments that began with the expeditions of the twentieth century, and has intensified since the 1960s. Clearly mountain-based tourism can bring economic benefits to areas

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with few other economic opportunities and can have a significant impact on the host community. Mountaineering can provide opportunities for local people including, guiding and logistical support, retailing equipment and hospitality. It can also result in development benefits, for example in the Khumbu area of Nepal, which Hillary first passed through on his way to summit Everest in 1953, reporting high levels of poverty amongst the indigenous mountain Sherpa. Today, mountain tourism has brought not only many shops and lodges but also schools, sewerage, healthcare, electricity and street lighting to places such as Namche Bazaar, the main settlement of the region.

Johnston and Edwards were perhaps the earliest commentators to foretell how the activity of mountaineering has become progressively commodified over past decades:

Corporate sponsorship has shaped mountain experiences and even the fantasy of a mountain experience in order to sell commodities to a consuming culture ... many more well-equipped, stylishly dressed holiday consumers are travelling to mountain regions ... sent by an ever-growing legion of adventure travel companies who advertise their services in Adventure Travel magazines and guides. They arrive carrying clothing and equipment purchased at outdoor shops staffed by adventure enthusiasts; and they are guided through their mountain adventure by mountaineers turned tour guides.

(1994: 468)

This commercialism has been led by both technological and organizational changes, as suggested by Pomfret (2011: 502) who contends that 'numerous factors have facilitated an increase in people doing mountaineering, including gear improvements, high-tech support systems, improved tourist infrastructure, easier accessibility and diminished risk levels'. Whilst 'mountains (still) represent escape locations that offer excitement, stimulation, and potential adventure' (Beedie and Hudson 2003: 625), that adventure is often the source of a business opportunity.

Thus, as with leisure and tourism, the 'boundaries between mountaineering and tourism have become blurred' (Beedie and Hudson 2003: 626). A particular example of this has been the increased development of mountain trekking, often including the ascent of 'trekking peaks', which may involve the use of safety ropes and basic equipment, but do not require the more developed climbing skills required by other ascents. Trekking is normally a multi-day journey, undertaken on foot in areas where other means of transport are generally not available. Mowforth and Munt (2009) explain that, 'trekking is the visiting of off-the-beaten-track locations and involves walking, often but not always in organized parties accompanied by number of porters' (p. 216). Many treks take place in tough mountainous environments at high altitudes, for example in the Himalayas or Andes and can include high mountain passes and peaks. Pobocik and Butalla (1998) found that the majority of those trekking for leisure in the

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1 Himalayas were from Europe and North America and were mostly older male
2 trekkers trekking in groups. Motivation for trekking can be wide ranging. Parti-
3 cipants trek for leisure and adventure, to experience local culture, view wildlife
4 or go on pilgrimages to sacred sites. A key part of the appeal is the challenge.
5 Mountain trekking has also begun to become more popular in Asian markets, as
6 detailed in Case Study 2 examining mountain hiking in Taiwan. Mountain hikers
7 in China have recently been dubbed 'donkey friends', because they walk along
8 trails carrying provisions on their back. In Yunnan there are plans to develop
9 historical silk road trails such as the *Ancient Tea Horse Road* as China's first
10 long distance trail. In Korea the 735 km Baekdu-daegan long-distance hiking
11 trail is being developed to cross the peninsula (Mason 2009). This trail combines
12 religious elements of temple visits with hiking activity and is being promoted as
13 a sustainable form of mountain recreation.

14 However, mountains are still dangerous places, particularly as 'weather con-
15 ditions undergo dramatic changes over relatively short periods of time in moun-
16 tain regions, and this directly affects mountaineering successes' (Pomfret 2006:
17 118). They are also 'wild rugged places that contain objective dangers, such as
18 exposure to extreme elemental conditions and loose rock, which make mountain
19 recreation activities inherently risky and hazardous' (Beedie and Hudson 2003:
20 627). Ironically, two tourists died in 2010 whilst visiting the recently erupted
21 Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland, not from extreme heat, but from hypothermia
22 caused by extreme cold (Heikkinen 2011). Many climbers, skiers and hikers are
23 injured whilst performing their recreational pursuits in these environments every
24 year, and as more and more people voyage there, the numbers will only further
25 increase. Several hundred climbers now attempt to climb Mt Everest every year
26 for example (Hales 2007).

27 Despite greater technology and knowledge of this environment, 'an analysis
28 of the death rate on Mt Everest between 1980 and 2002 found it had not changed
29 over the years, with about one death for every 10 successful ascents' (Sutherland
30 2006: 452). Although most deaths are put down to injury or exhaustion, Suther-
31 land (2006) suggests that the environment itself is a major contributory factor. A
32 significant number of deaths, and a major reason for admission to base camp
33 medical facilities, are caused by high altitude cerebral oedema (HACE) and high
34 altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE) (commonly lumped together as altitude
35 sickness), which is why these high altitude areas are often called the 'death
36 zone'. However, tourists do not have to be this extreme to suffer the ill effects of
37 the mountain environment, as 77 per cent of trekkers climbing Kilimanjaro in
38 Tanzania suffered from acute mountain sickness (AMS) during their trek, in
39 extreme cases leading to 16 altitude-related tourist deaths between 1996 and
40 2003 (Davies *et al.* 2009).

41 While mountaineering can be a low-impact activity, in areas such as the
42 Khumbu which attracts large numbers of mountaineers on multi-day commercial
43 expeditions, it can have a negative impact on the mountain environment, particu-
44 larly littering and human waste. In recent years, action has been taken to address
45 these problems and the situation has somewhat improved. For example, there are

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organized clean-ups on major peaks retrieving rubbish from past expeditions, expeditions are now fined if they do not carry out their rubbish and local environmental non-governmental organizations are campaigning for the installation of toilets at Everest Base Camp. In recognition of the impacts that mountain-based tourism can have on mountain environments and communities there are global campaigns for improved management of mountain areas. One example is the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation's (UIAA) 'Mountain Protection Award'. The award recognizes best practice in mountain tourism in ways that offer long-term benefits to the global mountain tourism industry as well as to the local mountain people and their environment particularly in less-developed countries (Huang and Talbot 2015).

These risks to mountain tourists, mountain communities and mountain environments, clearly require active management. Responses to these are many, and we can examine some of these through various management strategies. First, mountain awareness includes the provision of adequate training and guiding of mountaineering tourists. This includes building indigenous mountaineering skills in mountain areas. Second, attention needs to be paid to livelihoods of the communities that host mountain tourism, to ensure that opportunities augment existing options available and impacts are minimized. Last, it is important that mountain environments are protected through effective management regimes.

Mountain awareness

Guides are clearly very important in mountain areas, and can be central to the safe completion of the experience. In her study of package mountaineering tourists, Pomfret notes

Guides are an essential element of the package mountaineering holiday ... they are renowned for their expertise in the mountains and have substantial knowledge and experience in mountaineering ... essentially, guides know how to cope in the mountains and how to look after their clients.

(2011: 508)

Despite the obvious economic opportunity, increased guiding has not been without controversy. For example Everest has remained both the pinnacle of mountaineering experience and attendant commodification, with guided trips for wealthy, although not necessarily able, clients being the norm. On 19 May 2012 a record 234 people summited the mountain in one day, and images of huge queues on the slopes circulated in the worlds media (BBC 2013). In 2013 there was controversy as two talented western climbers clashed with Sherpas laying ropes for the season's paying clients. This high altitude mountaineering tourism industry has become dominated by handful of very successful high end operators, such as IMG (International Mountain Guides) or Jagged Globe. The latter, originally set up in 1988, conducted the first UK commercial trip to Everest in 1993. The company has approximately 1,000 clients a year and included adventure

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1 skiing in its portfolio which is focused on exclusive mountain experiences. The
2 delivery and marketing of the trips has emphasis on an expedition approach, and
3 whilst staff are highly trained, clients are not 'guided' in a traditional package
4 format.

5 However, one problem in guiding is the continued dominance of western
6 guides over locally trained personnel. Many developing countries have a limited
7 mountaineering skills base with which to support the development of indigenous
8 mountaineering tourism. However, in some cases international mountaineering
9 tourists can be used to support skills development. One positive example of this
10 is in Azerbaijan, where a small facility was set up by western individuals to
11 teach climbing skills. Azerbaijan Mountain Adventures runs a small climbing
12 wall in the town of Sheki, nestled at the base of the greater Caucasian range.
13 This was in response to two independent trends, the first of which was an
14 increasing interest from western tourists to explore the Caucasian peaks. The
15 second was a recognition that Azerbaijan had a large number of IDP (internally
16 displaced persons) following the conflict in the southern region of Nagorno
17 Karabakh. This put pressure on many northern towns such as Sheki which had
18 limited community and sports facilities to provide for these migrants. Thus a
19 climbing centre was set up in 2011 to fulfil both the need for a community centre
20 and to build climbing skills, and to provide guiding services to western clients
21 (Figure 16.1). Arguably the former has been most successful to date, with the
22 centre being used as a multifunctional space for community-based meetings and
23 other sports including table tennis and dancing and classes on debating, English
24 and computing. However, it has also nurtured home-grown climbing talent and
25 supported the development of a National Climbing Federation. Specific female
26 only climbing sessions have allowed women and girls to develop their climbing
27 skills in a traditionally patriarchal society, and allowed them to compete in
28 national competitions.

29 Nevertheless, it is not just local skills that are important, but also skills of the
30 tourists, particularly as the trend has been towards lower skilled individuals
31 being commercially guided through mountain environments. One issue of par-
32 ticular importance in mountainous areas is avalanche awareness and preparation.
33 In 2012–2013, there was a number of fatal avalanche incidents in the Scottish
34 mountains, including three individuals who were killed in a multiple burial inci-
35 dent. These individuals were part of a mountain skills training group from Glen-
36 more Lodge, Scotland's National Mountain Training Centre. A subsequent
37 review and investigation led to the centre deciding to implement mandatory ava-
38 lanche safety equipment and training for all students and staff engaged in their
39 winter mountain courses. Personal avalanche safety equipment includes a trans-
40 ceiver, shovel and probe (or TSP), which can be used to quickly locate and dig
41 out any avalanche victims. Use of avalanche safety equipment in mountaineer-
42 ing contexts has been the subject of debate, since it complicates the alpine
43 approach to mountaineering prevalent in mountain culture (Varley *et al.* 2012).
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- Dağda məşq etmək imkan olacaq
- 10 yaşdan yuxarı olanlar dəvət olunur

QIZLAR DIRMANMA KLUBU

- Təkcə qızlar üçün
- Məşq həftədə 2 dəfə keçirilir
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Telefon: 055 322 22 61
Facebook: Azeri Mountain Adventures
İş Vaxtları: Həftənin I, IV, VI, Bazar - saat 13:00-21:00





STOLÜSTÜ TENİS



STOLÜSTÜ FUTBOL



RESPUBLİKA ÇEMPİONATI

Figure 16.1 Mountaineering skills development, Azeri Mountain Adventures, Sheki, Azerbaijan.

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Mountain livelihoods

One of the principal concerns of management of mountaineering tourism is how to ensure that the industry contributes sustainably to the livelihoods of mountain communities. It is clear that activities such as mountaineering and trekking do have the potential to bring benefits to local communities. For example in Nepal, in the past two decades, the numbers trekking and mountaineering grew from 42,308 in 1991 to 86,260 in 2011 (Visit Nepal 2013). The impact of this is that the trekking industry of Nepal provides nearly 24,000 full-time jobs, and approximately 70,000 people are employed as porters on a freelance basis (Mowforth and Munt 2009), providing incomes in areas where there are limited other economic opportunities. However, trekking can also bring negative impacts as large numbers descend on fragile mountain environments which normally sustain only small populations. Key impacts on the environment include littering, human waste disposal and excessive fuel wood consumption. Despite the benefits brought, lowland porters carry extreme loads and are often ill equipped to deal with extreme weather conditions at higher altitudes. In worst cases they may suffer frost bite and injury jeopardizing their ability to make a living from tourism in the future, which has prompted action by Tourism Concern under the *Trekking Wrongs: Porters' Rights* campaign.

This campaign has been developed to improve working conditions for mountain porters in trekking destinations. In contrast to their well-heeled clients, porters often face lack of shelter, inadequate clothing and food, and low pay. Nepalese porters, who are often poor farmers from lowland areas, and are unused to high altitudes and harsh mountain conditions, are four times more likely to suffer accidents and illnesses than western trekkers, facing frostbite, altitude sickness and even death (Tourism Concern 2011). There are many reports of porters being abandoned by tour groups when they fall ill or being abandoned in life-threatening blizzards while trekkers get rescued by helicopter. In April 2014 12 Nepalese guides were killed in an avalanche on Everest whilst preparing the route for commercial clients. Many porters and guides feel that the highly physical nature of the job and the menial task makes operators and tourists treat them as 'beasts of burden', with limited rights. Tourism Concern sought to address this issue by working with the trekking industry and tour operators to address porters' rights and working conditions. This included developing a code of practice with minimum standards of working conditions that could be used as a basis for policies on porters' rights. They also campaigned publicly on this issue to raise awareness amongst trekkers and mobilize their support for improved industry practice and, by 2009, 49 out of 79 UK operators had policies on porters. In Tanzania, the code of conduct has been used by the Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project (KPAP) to develop its own guidelines for proper porter treatment. In addition KPAP has provided proper mountain climbing gear for 4,782 porters and has sponsored classes in first aid and HIV/AIDS awareness (Tourism Concern 2011). In Peru there is now a US\$8 a day minimum wage for porters and tighter control over agencies that fail to comply with the regulations.

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Tourism contributions to mountain livelihoods can be assessed using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. This framework enables us to ‘understand and analyze the complex livelihoods of rural people’ (Lee 2005: 216), through assessing the context, livelihood resources, livelihood strategies and institutional processes inherent in a development situation (Scoones 1998). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) has been particularly applied in sub-Saharan settings, particularly by the UK Department for International Development (DfID), especially those deemed to have a high degree of vulnerability, but can be equally applied to montane communities. At the core of the framework are community resources or ‘the basic material and social, tangible and intangible assets that people have in their possession ... such livelihood assets may be seen as the “capital” base from which different productive streams are derived, from which livelihoods are constructed’ (Scoones 1998: 7). These were placed broadly into categories of natural, economic, human and social assets, with later refinement in DfID models of physical and financial descriptors in place of economic capital. Although not specifically focused on tourism, the model has proved useful in evaluating baselines and changes to community assets caused by tourism development (Lee 2005; Tao and Wall 2009), adding to other conceptual models of fractions of capital in tourism studies such as that by Hampton and Christensen (2007). However, there has been some further degree of refinement; for example in the context of coastal tourism, cultural capital was added to the SLA framework due to ‘the cultural resources (heritage, customs, traditions) [being] very much a feature of local livelihoods’ (Cater and Cater 2007: 114), as well as being seen as central to the tourism product. Further, Wang and Cater (2014) identified the importance of political capital in a mountain community in Taiwan seeking to use ecotourism as a recovery tool following a major earthquake.

The vulnerability of mountain communities in western Nepal led to the establishment of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) to address environmental problems and promote sustainable community development in the Annapurna area of Nepal. Livelihood protection has been a foundation of their management approach over nearly three decades (Figure 16.2). The ACA was established in 1986 in response to deforestation that was generally attributed to tourism development and was integrated within the ACAP, run by the non-governmental organization, the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation now re-named the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). Aiming to integrate sustainable development, emphasis is placed upon the participation of village peoples in development decision making and capacity building to realize self-directed opportunities and eventual self-management of ACA. Partnerships between ACAP and village representatives have subsequently been established, for example with village development committees (VDCs), lodge management committees (LMCs) and women’s development committees (WDCs). Alongside sustainable tourism management, ACAP’s activities include forest and wildlife management, the promotion of alternative energy sources to relieve the pressure on the forests (for example solar power and backboilers), strategies to minimize littering (for example encouraging tourists to use re-fillable water bottles and village clean-up

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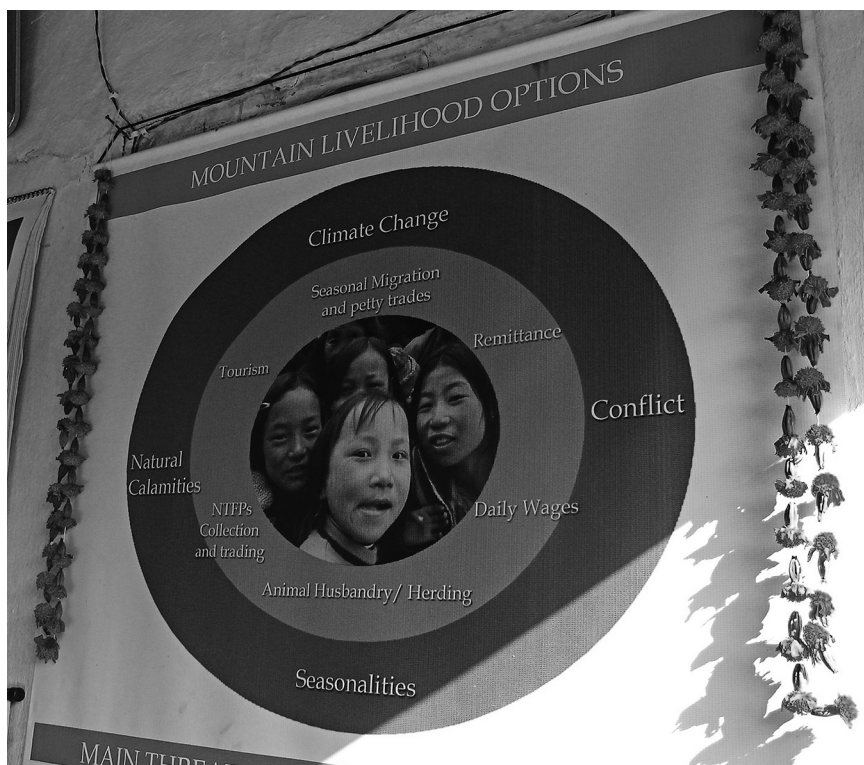


Figure 16.2 Mountain livelihood options in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project.

campaigns), conservation education and training for trekking lodge operators (Visit Nepal 2013). One of the most successful of the alternative energy sources has been the introduction of backboilers which has increased energy efficiency and was subsidized 50 per cent by ACAP. Instead of using a separate fireplace for heating water, this fuelwood-saving device feeds water pipes connected to a tank (frequently a disused oil drum) into the cooking hearth. The water, thus heated, returns through convection to this backboiler. This simple, appropriate technology fix means that during cooking, water can be simultaneously heated for showers and other purposes. Its introduction resulted in a 675 kg reduction per month per lodge of fuelwood consumption during the tourist season. Mountain Tourism has a specific economic role in contributing to the financing of these programmes such as these, raising monies from entry permits into ACA (see below) and through direct tourist expenditure in the area. The ACA has been acknowledged from different sources (including winning the British Airways 'Tourism for Tomorrow Award' in 1991 and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Conservation Merit Award in 2000), as an exemplar of how tourism can be used for nature conservation and community development in mountain regions. The principles of the ACAP have been

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applied to other trekking destinations throughout the world, for example the Rinjani ecotrek programme (Cater 2012). Respecting local communities and being environmentally friendly benefits trekkers, local residents and the environment. This is a win–win situation for humans and ecosystems and makes trekking activity more sustainable in long term.

Mountain protection

A further mechanism to ensure the sustainability of increasing mountaineering tourism is to develop effective protection regimes through protected area management. Mountain areas are a vitally important ecosystem, often influencing more populated lowland areas in significant ways, for example in vital water and sediment transport. For example 3,700m Mt Rinjani, a popular mountain trekking destination on the Indonesian island of Lombok, provides approximately 70 per cent of the island's population (approximately three million people) with water for drinking and agriculture, especially rice cultivation. Therefore the vast majority of mountain regions popular for mountaineering tourism are located within protected areas. Ensuring protection may involve working with a wide range of stakeholders, for example in the UK, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) works with stakeholders such as landowners and conservationists to address climbing-related issues. The BMC works with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to impose climbing bans during nesting periods on rock faces where rare birds breed. Management agencies and protected area authorities are often responsible for enforcing such management.

Table 16.1 lists the protected area authority, number of ascents and the permit costs for the 'Seven Summits', or the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. This has become an increasingly popular bucket list for dedicated mountaineers, echoing the enduring popularity of lesser heights (but perhaps equal feats) of the Munros of Scotland or the 100 mountains of Taiwan described in Case Study 2. Over 350 people had completed the list of the Seven Summits by 2012. The allure of completing this list has led to the emergence specialist tourism operators catering specifically for achieving all of the peaks, often in a given time frame. All of the peaks in the list bar Mt Vinson in Antarctica are contained within a protected area. The latter is undeniably unusual as it is not located within a territorial entity. However, all tourism activities in Antarctica are governed by the International Association of Antarctic Tourism Operators (IAATO), which has noted the increase in adventure tourism (including mountaineering) on the continent in recent years. All of those peaks within protected areas fall into the IUCN category II of national park, except for the huge areas of Denali national park and Qomolangma National Nature Preserve (QNNP). Denali is listed as category VI which is a protected area with sustainable use of natural resources. QNNP is a vast area of the Tibetan plateau which has a mosaic of various levels of protection. QNNP is distinctive because no warden force protects its natural and cultural resources. Management is instead enforced by local communities, especially the governments of the four counties that comprise

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Table 16.1 Protected areas, fees and ascents of the seven summits

<i>Mountain</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Protected area, date established and size</i>	<i>IUCN category</i>	<i>High season climbing fee</i>	<i>2013 attempts (and successful summits)</i>
Mt Everest, Nepal/Tibet	8,848 m	Sagarmatha National Park (1976) 1,148 km ²	II	Fee \$11,000 (reduced from \$25,000 in 2014)	800 (658)
Aconcagua, Argentina	6,980 m	Qomolangma National Nature Preserve (1989) 36,000 km ²	II	\$5,500 (\$6,500 without a guide)	3,500 (1,000)
Denali Alaska, North America	22,902 ft 6,194 m 20,320 ft	Aconcagua Provincial Park (1983) 710 km ² Denali National Park and Preserve (1917) 24,500 km ²	VI	\$365	1,151 (783)
Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, Africa	5,896 m 19,340 ft	Mt Kilimanjaro National Park 753.5 km ²	II	\$70/day + huts Approx \$525/trip	Approx 30,000
Elbrus, Russia	5,642 m 18,513 ft	Prielbrusie National Park (1986) 1,014 km ²	II	€25	n.a., but up to 100 climbers/day in peak season
Mt Vinson, Antarctica	4,897 m 16,067 ft	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	640 total climbing activities in Antarctica in 2012/2013
Carstensz Pyramid, West Papua, New Guinea	4,884 m 16,023 ft	Lorentz Nature Monument (1919) Lorentz National Park (1997) 25,056 km ²	II	Multiple permits required from different levels of government: total expedition cost about \$18,500	Very low due to inaccessibility, estimated <500 total



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the preserve (Tingri, Dinjie, Nyalam and Kyirong) with a Management Bureau in Shigatse, the prefecture headquarters. However this leads to exploitation of the lax tourism management by operators who often recirculate permits with different groups of mountain tourists, as was our experience in 2007.

Permits are the principal method for managing mountaineering access and are widely used, particularly in less developed countries to maximize revenue from their mountain resources. It is not known how much of this revenue goes towards mountain protection, although this is often used as a justification for charging mountaineering tourists. Nepal for example earns some \$3.3 million annually from climbing permits (Coldwell 2014). Interestingly Argentinian authorities charge more for a permit to climb Aconcagua should climbers be climbing without a locally certified guide. This is to disincentivize independent climbers due to the higher incidence of accidents and consequent costs of rescue for these climbers. As the easiest of the peaks, Kilimanjaro permits are much lower, with many more tourists ascending the peak than the others. However, here permits are charged by the day, which some commentators believe has contributed to rushing the easiest of the seven summits, leading to an estimated ten deaths a year on the mountain. Given the potential revenue, permitting is usually heavily policed, with Cartenz Pyramid being notorious for the difficulty of collecting a plethora of permits required to climb the mountain. In Tibet, Chinese authorities threaten a fine of \$200 should tourists venture beyond the limits of the base camp for Everest on the north side (Figure 16.3).



Figure 16.3 Warning of fines at Mt Everest/Qomolangma base camp, Tibet.

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Mountain management or managing mountains?

This chapter has built on the previous contributions in illustrating the growing importance of mountain regions for tourism, but emphasizing that management of this activity takes at least three forms; mountain awareness, in the form of guiding and training; mountain livelihoods, for recognizing and supporting mountain communities; and mountain protection for managing these fragile environments. Although the latter often predates the two earlier themes, experience has shown that protection and management cannot be successful without attention to the needs both of tourists and of host communities. It is undeniable that mountains will only further cement their allure for tourism and recreation, as the commercialization and access described in this volume accelerates. Indeed, one only needs to examine the 'virtual' popularity of mountains in adventure film making. Mountain film festivals are becoming increasingly popular with a wide audience, and one of the longest established, the Banff Mountain Film Festival, now embarks on an annual world tour with stops in around 285 communities and 30 countries. Despite such drivers, attitudes from mountaineering tourists will inevitably have to change, particularly in regard to the previous trend towards first ascents. In common with polar tourism, mountains are places that, once conquered, no longer meet the wilderness criteria of 'treading where no human has done so before' (Stonehouse and Crosbie 1995). Of course this concept, which has dominated some sectors of mountaineering tourism to date, is a false and inherently unsustainable one promoted by western attitudes towards these regions.

The greatest threat to mountain environments is, however, not the tourism that takes place within them, but our unsustainable practices below them. It is widely recognized that climate change will bring dramatic changes to high altitude regions, with retreating glaciers, reduced snow cover and a host of attendant ecosystem changes. The International Year of the Mountains in 2002 was an initiative to increase international awareness of the global importance of mountain ecosystems (UNSA 2002). Indeed the IYM was partially a response to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change study on the threat posed by global warming to alpine glaciers. As 'water towers' of the world, mountains are essential to life on Earth. Yet, globalization, urbanization and tourism (both mass and mountain based) pose a threat to mountain communities and their natural resources that many rely upon in order to sustain livelihoods both there and in the lowlands (UNEP 2012).

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